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# THE HOLLANDIA CAMPAIGN: THE INDIRECT APPROACH IN OPERATIONAL MANEUVER

by

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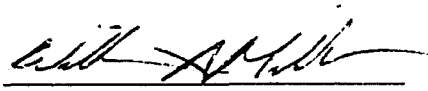
A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: 

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economy of force. Lessons derived for today's operational commander include the importance of viewing the indirect approach from more than a geographical perspective; the value of amphibious operations; the value of C3I resources in seizing and maintaining the initiative; the limitations when fighting a primitive force; the tradeoff between surprise and flexibility; the importance of minimal combat; and the value of synchronization through joint operations.

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

General Douglas MacArthur's campaign to seize the Japanese logistics base at Hollandia in March and April 1944 stands out as a masterful application of the indirect approach in operational maneuver. The indirect approach is a major theme in the writings of Captain B.H. Liddell Hart and in ground warfare (especially U.S. Marine Corps) doctrine today. The concept and its relationship to the principles of war may be useful in deriving lessons for today's operational commander. The purpose of this paper is to study the indirect approach, and, in light of that concept, use a historical campaign and the principles of war to derive lessons of value to the operational commander. This paper will explain the indirect approach as described by Liddell Hart and as written in current doctrine, provide a description of the Hollandia campaign, and detail the indirect approach and its underlying principles and their relation to Hollandia. It will conclude with lessons from that campaign that are applicable today.

## CHAPTER II

## THE INDIRECT APPROACH

**Liddell Hart's Concept.** Although the principles underlying the indirect approach can be traced far back in history to the writings of Sun Tsu, the British military historian and strategist Captain B.H. Liddell Hart is the most famous modern proponent of this strategic and operational concept. Liddell Hart's brief military career was shaped by the horrors of World War I, and he was strongly opposed to those who believed that the only objective of strategy is battle. Liddell Hart believed that battle must only be entered under the best circumstances, which would ensure minimal actual fighting. At its highest level, "the perfection of strategy would be...to produce a decision without any serious fighting."[1]

Liddell Hart writes that strategy should not be developed in direct opposition to the resistance posed by the opponent's strength, but should lessen that resistance through the combined exploitation of movement and surprise:

> "Although strategy may aim more at exploiting movement than at exploiting surprise, or conversely, the two elements react on each other. Movement generates surprise, and surprise gives impetus to movement."[2]

The goal of strategy as practiced using the indirect approach is the "dislocation" of the enemy, which will either produce a decision itself, or result in a decisive battle. Dislocation can be produced in several ways:

> "In the physical, or "logistical", sphere [dislocation] is a result of a move which (a) upsets the enemy's

> dispositions and, by compelling a sudden "change of front," dislocates the distribution and organization of his forces: (b) separates his forces; (c) endangers his supplies; (d) menaces the...routes by which he can retreat...In the psychological sphere, dislocation is the result of the impression on the commander's mind of the physical effects...listed."[3]

However, Liddell Hart provides a warning that endangering an opponent's supplies and routes of retreat might not be enough to dislocate him, for if he "lives off the country," his line of communication is unimportant.[4]

There is always some risk in attempting dislocation, in that the enemy may attempt to counter this strategy. To minimize this risk the enemy must be "distracted" prior to dislocation:

> "The purpose of this "distraction" is to deprive the enemy of his freedom of action....In the physical [sphere], it should cause a distension of his forces or their diversion to unprofitable ends....In the psychological sphere, the same effect is sought by playing upon the fears of, and by deceiving, the opposing commander."[5]

**Current Army and Marine Corps Doctrine**. While integrating the principles which make up Liddell Hart's concepts, current Army doctrine only sparingly details an operational indirect approach. The importance of surprise, and the various means of achieving surprise, are related to the indirect approach:

> "Surprise and the indirect approach are desirable characteristics of any scheme of maneuver. When a geographically indirect approach is not available, the commander can achieve a similar effect by doing the unexpected - striking earlier, in greater force, with unexpected weapons, or at an unlikely place.[6]

The importance of not wasting men and resources in a battle of attrition is alluded to in the doctrinal discussion of

operational planning. The commander is advised to use an indirect approach in developing his concept of operation, so as to "[embody] an indirect approach that preserves the strength of the force for decisive battles."[7]

Marine Corps doctrine, liberally flavored with quotes of Sun Tsu and Liddell Hart, incorporates the concept of the indirect approach somewhat differently than Army doctrine, and in more depth. The primary focus of Marine Corps doctrine in this regard is on avoiding unnecessary combat:

> "The true object is to accomplish the aim of strategy with the minimal amount of necessary combat, reducing fighting to the slenderest possible proportions...The idea is to give battle only where we want and when we must."[8]

Marine Corps doctrine goes on to describe the objective towards which the forces efforts should be directed. The focus is on the enemy's center of gravity, and attacking weakness with strength:

> "...we do not want to attack this (critical) capability directly, strength vs strength; rather, we prefer to attack it from an aspect of vulnerability...the enemy will likely recognize the importance of this capability and will take measures to protect it. We may have to create vulnerability; we may have to design a progressive sequence of actions to expose or isolate the critical capability..."[9]

The primary method of ensuring that the operational commander avoids unnecessary fighting is by maintaining the initiative through a high operational tempo:

> "Ideally, the operational commander fights only when and where he wants to. His ability to do this is largely a function of his ability to maintain the initiative and shape the events of war to his

> purposes...and initiative in turn is largely the product of maintaining a higher operational tempo.[10]

One method provided for creating this operational tempo important to the indirect approach is by "multiple actions undertaken simultaneously."[11]

Marine Corps doctrine describes maneuver in relation to the concept of reducing the amount of fighting required, and is defined as "the employment of forces to secure an advantage - or leverage - over the enemy to accomplish the mission."[12]

Major Concepts of the Indirect Approach. Two major concepts that run through both Liddell Hart's writings and current doctrine can be derived for the indirect approach. These are minimal combat through dislocation (by maneuver or other means) and surprise, and fighting weakness with strength. Further discussion of the indirect approach will focus on these concepts.

## CHAPTER III

## THE HOLLANDIA CAMPAIGN

**The Campaign Plan**. In early 1944, the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) forces, under General Douglas MacArthur, had landed on the Admiralty Islands one month earlier than had originally been planned. Complete occupation of those islands was anticipated in early 1944. MacArthur took advantage of this situation to increase the pace of his campaign. On 5 March 1944, he proposed to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) that the planned invasion of the Hansa Bay area be replaced by a leap of over 500 miles to seize the Japanese supply base at Hollandia. This move would isolate the Japanese 18th Army along the north coast of New Guinea in the Hansa Bay, Wewak, and Madang areas, prevent Japanese efforts at building Hollandia into a major airbase, and hasten the Allied advance towards the Philippines. The JCS approved the operation against Hollandia (OPERATION RECKLESS) with an execution date of 15 April (eventually postponed until 22 April). The Central Pacific forces under Admiral Nimitz were directed to provide aircraft carrier support for the operation.[13]

The operation required Nimitz' support because Hollandia was effectively outside the range of the available Allied fighter-escort aircraft. The area could be bombed at night without escorts, but target identification would be difficult, and the

tropical weather in that area in April usually included evening storms.[14] Nimitz proposed that carrier-based strikes hit Hollandia prior to D-Day and provide support for the landings and shore operations for a limited period. MacArthur wanted the carriers until D+8, but Nimitz would only provide carrier support through D+3. The problem of air support for the operation after the carriers left was solved by adding the seizure of Aitape to the operation.

Aitape, located on the coast between Wewak and Hollandia, was the lightly defended location of one completed and two partially completed airfields. Allied engineers estimated that they could have an airfield operational at Aitape within 48 hours of the initial landings there. Land-based fighter aircraft could then provide support to the forces at Hollandia. Ground forces at Aitape would also provide some protection for Hollandia should the Japanese 18th Army move to counter the operation there.[15]

**The Area of Operations**. Hollandia looked to be a valuable prize for the Allied forces. The Japanese had completed construction of three airstrips there, and had started work on a fourth. Humboldt Bay at Hollandia was the only good anchorage in that portion of the New Guinea coast. From Hollandia aircraft could dominate western New Guinea, the near portions of the Dutch East Indies, and the western Caroline Islands. Hollandia could be (and was) built up into a major Allied base.[16]

The geography at Hollandia consists of Humboldt Bay near the town of Hollandia and Tanahmerah Bay farther to the west, with

the Cyclops Mountains along the coast between those two bays. Lake Sentani, a large freshwater lake, is located south of the Cyclops Mountains. Between the lake and the mountains lies the Sentani plain on which the Japanese airstrips were located. Humboldt Bay has several beaches capable of supporting an amphibious landing, while Tanahmerah Bay has fewer good beaches. All of the beaches in the area are narrow and easily defensible.[17] Aitape is located on the coastal plain; terrain is swampy with few identifiable features. Beaches are good for amphibious landings in the Aitape area.[18]

**Enemy Forces**. The Japanese Army's Imperial General Headquarters had realized the potential importance of Hollandia since September 1943, and understood the need to build up defenses there. However, largely because the Hollandia area belonged to the 8th Area Army at Rabaul, whose concerns were on the defense of that base and the more immediately threatened eastern area of New Guinea, no action was taken towards strengthening its defense. The commander of the Japanese 18th Army opposing the Allied forces in New Guinea, Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi, began to realize Hollandia's significance early in 1944. But it was not until March 1944, when the 18th Army and its area of operations passed from the 8th Area Army to the 2d Area Army, that the Imperial General Headquarters ordered 2d Area Army to move 18th Army westward from Madang to Wewak, Aitape and Hollandia, and to develop Hollandia into a major supply base.[18]

General Adachi's 18th Army, consisting of three understrength divisions, was ordered by 2d Area Army to immediately move one division to Hollandia, delay the allies from the current defensive lines, and hold at Wewak, Aitape, and Hollandia. However, in executing these orders, General Adachi ordered the 51st Division to prepare for movement to Hollandia commencing in late July, rather than immediately.[20]

Even if its commander had followed orders, the 18th Army was not capable of moving quickly. Allied air superiority and a shortage of coastal transportation restricted movement to land routes. These consisted of jungle trails crossing two major rivers and almost impassable swamps. Had the 18th Army moved forces immediately towards Hollandia, they would have been unable to complete movement prior to the invasion there.[21]

The Japanese 4th Air Army was the organization primarily responsible for air operations in New Guinea. The 6th Air Division and the 4th Air Army Headquarters were located at Hollandia.[22] Although Allied estimates indicated that the Japanese had approximately 750 aircraft in the SWPA, poor maintenance, lack of spare parts, lack of trained pilots, and a high accident rate kept most of these aircraft on the ground much of the time. The SWPA staff expected the Japanese to be able to muster approximately 240 aircraft to defend Hollandia and Aitape.[23]

The Japanese 9th Fleet, neadquartered at Hollandia, consisted of service troops, shore defense and naval antiaircraft

units, and some submarine chasers, minelayers, landing craft and armed barges. The Japanese Combined Fleet was waiting for the big naval battle, and would not oppose Allied operations against New Guinea or strengthen the 9th Fleet.[24]

MacArthur's staff believed that they would be opposed by 14,000 Japanese at Hollandia. When the invasion came, they faced approximately 11,000 Japanese, only about 500 of which were ground combat troops (largely antiaircraft artillery units). The remainder of the Japanese forces at Hollandia were logistics, headquarters, and other service personnel. Aside from the lack of defenders, the Japanese at Hollandia had other problems. All of the senior commanders at Hollandia were new to their duties (the senior officer at Hollandia, Major General Toyozo Kitazono, former commander of the 3d Field Transportation Unit at Wewak, arrived there only 10 days before the invasion), and no defensive plans were prepared.[25]

At Aitape, the SWPA staff expected opposition by approximately 3500 Japanese, including 1500 combat troops. In reality, there were no more than 1000 Japanese troops in the Aitape area, with the majority being antiaircraft artillery and service personnel.[26]

**Allied Forces**. The Sixth Army (designated ALAMO Force), under the command of Lieutenant General Walter Kreuger, would seize Hollandia and Aitape. The forces conducting the assault would consist of two and one half reinforced divisions, approximately 50,000 personnel.[27]

Ground operations at Hollandia would be conducted by I Corps (designated RECKLESS Task Force), commanded by Lieutenant General Robert L. Eichelberger. RECKLESS Task Force (TF) would consist of the 24th and 41st (less one regimental combat team) Infantry Divisions.[28] The 24th Division was to land at Tanahmerah Bay, while the 41st Division was to land at Humboldt Bay. Once ashore, the ground forces were to secure the beaches and move inland to seize the airstrips on the Lake Sentani Plain. Japanese forces were expected to concentrate to defend the landings at Humboldt Bay, so the main effort would be that of the 24th Division's RCTs at Tanahmerah Bay. The reserves were to land at that location.[29]

The Aitape landings were to be conducted by PERSECUTION Task Force, of which the combat element consisted of the 163d Infantry RCT of the 41st Division. PERSECUTION TF was to seize the airstrips at Aitape and prepare them for operations.[30]

Most naval Forces for the operation would be under the overall command of the commander of the US 7th Fleet and SWPA naval forces, Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid.[31] Overall control of the amphibious operations at both Hollandia and Aitape would be under Vice Admiral Daniel Barbey, commander of TF 77. TF 77 was divided into three attack groups, West, Central, and East, the first two for the Hollandia landings and the last for Aitape.[32]

Two task forces from the Central Pacific Area would provide naval air support for the operation. TF 58, under the command of

Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, would include three fast carrier groups and would provide air support for the operations at Hollandia for the four days permitted by Nimitz. TF 78, commanded by Rear Admiral Ralph E. Davison, consisting of eight escort carriers, would provide air support for the landings at Aitape, and was to be released no later than D+19.[33] Although TF 78 would be under the operational control of the 7th Fleet, the fast carriers groups of TF 58 would be independent of the 7th Fleet, with Admiral Mitscher only being required to coordinate with SWPA naval forces.[34]

Allied Air Forces consisted of the U.S. 5th Air Force (AF) along with Allied air units under Lieutenant General George C. Kenney.[35] The Allied Air Forces mustered 803 fighter and 780 bombers in the 5th Air Force as well as an additional 507 Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) aircraft.

Despite the large numbers of aircraft, the Allied Air Forces were hindered by the distances of the objectives from allied airfields, which precluded ground based fighter support (this would be partly remedied, as detailed below). The nearest field was 358 nautical miles south of Hollandia at Merauke, with other airfields at least 390 nautical miles away. The nearest major air base was at Nadsab, 448 nautical miles from Hollandia. Air units had been preparing to support operations against Kavieng and Hansa Bay, and were not positioned to support the Hollandia operation.[36]

These distances precluded preparatory bombing of the objectives, with two exceptions: unescorted (and relatively inaccurate) night bombing missions, and bombing missions escorted by the new P-38s modified with additional fuel tanks. These newly available aircraft doubled flying ranges to a 350 mile combat radius, which was just sufficient to support missions against Hollandia and Aitape. The 5th AF had 106 long range P-38s operational by the beginning of April.[37] As for bombers, the Allied Air Forces had 113 B-24s in 9 squadrons available to bomb Hollandia and Aitape, as well as 131 B-25s and 172 A-20s (5th AF's entire medium and light bomber force).[38]

**Preparation for the Landings**. General MacArthur and the commanders of the forces involved in the Hollandia operation saw three major threats to its successful completion that required resolution. The Japanese 18th Army and other forces in New Guinea had to be prevented from reinforcing Hollandia and Aitape, and Japanese air strength capable of opposing the landings had to be neutralized. Finally, major Japanese naval forces had to be prevented from opposing the landings.

MacArthur's intelligence staff (greatly assisted by information derived from reading Japanese messages through ULTRA[39]) discovered that 18th Army units were moving back towards Wewak and Hansa Bay, so deception operations were conducted to convince the Japanese that these locations would be the next Allied objectives. SWPA air forces bombed Wewak heavily in March and April, and destroyers bombarded both the Wewak and

Hansa Bay areas as well.[40] Motor torpedo boats patrolled the coast near these areas at night, and submarines left empty life rafts (indicative of reconnaissance patrols) to be found on the beaches by the Japanese. Even dummy parachutists were dropped into the jungles. These actions helped divert Japanese attention away from the real objectives.[41]

Japanese air strength was being built up at the Hollandia airstrips to an estimated 351 aircraft by 30 March. Allied Air Forces conducted massive daylight bombing raids, supported by the long range P-38s, against Hollandia on seven occasions between 30 March and 16 April. As a result, Hollandia ceased to be a major Japanese air base. An estimated 350 planes were destroyed on the ground, and 60 planes were shot down. The 4th Air Army and the remaining aircraft of the Japanese 6th Air Division moved on to the Celebes in the Dutch East Indies.[42]

Aitape village and the nearby airstrips were hit by over 1100 tons of bombs before D-day. Wewak and Hansa Bay received over 1200 and 2100 tons, respectively, as part of the deception plan. Other Japanese airfields in New Guinea capable of affecting the operation were hit by RAAF aircraft.[43]

Concern of interference by the Japanese Fleet was alleviated by the independent mission given to TF 58. While Admiral Mitscher was directed to support the landings with air and naval fire support (reinforcing TF 77), he retained the freedom to break away and conduct operations against major Japanese naval

forces. Thus naval operations supporting Hollandia would lack centralized command.[44]

Between 16 and 18 April, the assault convoys of the RECKLESS and PERSECUTION TFs sailed to rendezvous with the naval forces from the Central Pacific Area. The assault convoys moved north around the eastern part of the Admiralty Islands to the rendezvous point, turned west, then sailed southwest towards Hollandia and Aitape. This circuitous route, also part of the deception, concealed the objectives from the Japanese.[45] The convoys were spotted by Japanese air on 19 April, but they were unable to determine the landing site. Final airstrikes at Hollandia, Aitape, and the Wakde-Sarmi areas on 21 April ensured that the local forces at each of these locations were convinced that they would be the major objectiv .[46]

**The Assault**. On the morning of 22 April, naval vessels bombarded the landing sites at Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays and at Aitape, prior to the landing forces moving toward the beaches. The Japanese did not respond to the naval gunfire, and only scattered small arms and automatic weapons fire opposed the forces coming ashore. Most of the defenders fled into the jungle.[47]

The 162d Infantry RCT of the 41st Division landed at Humboldt Bay and secured the town of Hollandia the next day. That regiment was followed ashore by the 186th RCT, which moved inland against light opposition towards the airstrips. With the 1st Battalion of the 186th making an amphibious movement across Lake Sentani, two of the three completed airstrips were secured

on 26 April, when contact was also made with patrols of the 24th Division moving up from Tanahmerah Bay.[48]

Although the expected opposition at Tanahmerah Bay had not materialized, the landings there were not problem free. The only ground reconnaissance of the landing sites attempted was the landing of a patrol by submarine two weeks previously. The patrol was betrayed by natives and neutralized by the Japanese.[49] Thus it was not until troops and supplies were on the beaches that it was discovered that Red Beach 2, the primary landing site at Tanahmerah, was backed by an impenetrable swamp. Red Beach 1, the other beach at Tanahmerah, was difficult to reach because of coral formations at its entrance. Despite this, troops and equipment were diverted to Red Beach 1 and shuttled to that beach from Red Beach 2. When forces eventually moved inland from Red Beach 1, what was thought to be a road traversable by vehicles was found to be a steep, narrow, trail. Eventually, General Eichelberger decided that Humboldt Bay should be the main effort.[50] Despite these unforeseen difficulties, the 1st Battalion of the 21st Infantry RCT moved inland from Tanahmerah Bay against light opposition, eventually supplied by a "bucket brigade" of up to 3500 other troops manhandling supplies up the trail, and an airdrop. That battalion cleared the Hollandia airstrip on the 26 April, and made contact with 41st Division elements that afternoon.[51]

At Aitape, 2 battalions of the 163d Infantry landed on 22 April. The few Japanese at that location fled, and the airstrips

were secured before dark. RAAF engineers were working on the airstrips by 1300 hours on D-day. One airstrip was ready by the afternoon of 24 April, and the 78 Wing, RAAF, landed on that day and the next.[52]

**Operation Completed.** Hollandia was the largest operation executed in the SWPA up to that time.[53] Lack of significant enemy opposition enabled release of the fast carriers on time, and allowed release of some of the escort carriers for refuel and resupply. The remainder of the escort carriers took over the close air support requirements from the fast carriers.[54] Allied casualties, most of which occurred during mopping up operations, totaled 143 KIAs and about 1100 WIA compared to over 3800 Japanese KIAs (a relatively large number of Japanese, 636, were capture).[55]

However, despite the successful completion of the operation, the Japanese 18th Army still existed. Approximately 20,000 Japanese troops attacked U.S. forces (by then the XI Corps) along the Druinimor River east of Aitape on the evening of 10-11 July. Heavy fighting continued in that area until early August. The 18th Japanese Army fought on against Australian forces until the end of the war.[56]

## CHAPTER IV

## THE INDIRECT APPROACH EXECUTED

The major concepts of the indirect approach derived in Chapter II, achieving objectives with minimal combat through dislocation and surprise, and fighting weakness with strength, relate well to the principles of war first developed by British Major General J.F.C. Fuller[57]. These concepts of the indirect approach were also illustrated to an exceptional degree in the Hollandia operation. This chapter will describe the relationship of the concepts of the indirect approach with the principles of war, and will discuss their application during the Hollandia operation.

**Dislocation**. Dislocation (either physical or psychological), is derived through an increased operational tempo and maintenance of the initiative. The concept of dislocation is directly related to the "offensive" and "maneuver" principles of war. The emphasis of these principles on flexibility, initiative, "setting the terms of battle", "exploiting vulnerabilities", and "placing the enemy at the disadvantage," make it difficult to realize the application of these principles other than through the dislocation concept of the indirect approach.[58]

The Hollandia operation illustrates the concept of dislocation in several respects. The operational tempo was increased through an assault at greater distance, and with more forces, than had been previously executed in the SWPA. The use

of ULTRA information for intelligence, and the power and mobility provided by air and naval superiority, ensured that MacArthur could maintain the initiative and stay a step ahead of the Japanese at all times. The assaults at Hollandia and Aitape compelled the enemy to react to Allied forces, endangered his supplies, and severed his line of communication. The result was an operation completed with minimal casualties. A communique issued by General MacArthur after the battle leaves no doubt the position in which the Japanese 18th Army found itself:

> "The (Hollandia) operation throws a loop...around the enemy's 18th Army... to the east are the Australians and Americans; to the west are the Americans; to the north, the sea controlled by Allied naval forces; to the south, untraversed jungle mountain ranges; and, over all, Allied air mastery. The enemy is now completely isolated."[59]

However, it is appropriate to refer back to Liddell Hart's warning about armies "living off the country," resulting in a lessening of the importance of their line of communication[60]. The Japanese 18th Army, while not able to richly provide for itself from the New Guinea jungles, did not require the logistics needed by the lavishly equipped Allied forces. Even with its line of communication severed and the war effectively passing it by, the 18th Army remained a threat to be reckoned with, as illustrated by the battles along the Druinimor River near Aitape several months after the completion of the Hollandia operation.

**Surprise**. The concept of surprise (Liddell Hart's "distraction") as part of the indirect approach does not deviate from the principle of war of the same name. That principle states that

surprise derives from "going against an enemy at a time and/or place or in a manner for which he is unprepared" and may result in "success out of proportion to the effort expended."[61] These phrases certainly apply to the indirect approach.

As detailed in the above description of the Hollandia campaign, surprise was a major factor in its planning and execution, and great efforts were taken to deceive the Japanese about the objectives of the campaign. In fact, the flexibility that could have resulted from an earlier landing at Aitape was sacrificed for surprise. Brigadier General Ennis Whitehead, commanding general, Advanced Echelon (ADVON), 5th Air Force, recommended a D-15 landing at Aitape so that land-based fighters could be ready by D-4. General Kreuger refused this recommendation so as not to risk surprise.[62]

When the landings were executed, the surprise of the Japanese was virtually complete:

> "At Humboldt Bay the surprise of the Japanese was so great that most of them fled at once from the beach area. Breakfast bowls of rice were only half consumed, and teapots were found still boiling when our first wave landed."[63]

Surprise was a large factor in ensuring that friendly casualties were few by preventing the enemy from recovering his balance and executing an operational and tactical defense:

> "At every one of the turns in the path [inland from Tanahmerah Bay], [U.S. troops] expected to meet point blank fire. But nothing happened. The enemy had really been surprised. They had fled into the jungle. There were fire lanes, prepared fire positions, and half-completed pillboxes, but no troops. In that terrain, a squad, literally, could have held up a division."[64]

But Liddell Hart's distraction is more than just surprise: it has as its purpose the "(deprivation) of the enemy's...freedom of action...(and) distension of his forces or their diversion..." [65] This relates well to the concept of fighting weakness with strength, and was executed in the Hollandia campaign not only by surprise and deception, but by the almost total destruction of Japanese air power.

**Fighting Weakness with Strength.** The concept of fighting weakness with strength is closely related to the principle of war known as "mass", and its reciprocal, "economy of force." Mass is, in short, the concentration of superior combat power. In order to accomplish this, economy of force is accepted elsewhere, with some risk, but protected by the dislocation and surprise of the enemy force.[66]

Opposing enemy weakness with massed combat power will likely have two results stressed as important in current Marine Corps and Army doctrine. These are achieving objectives with minimal combat and preserving the force. Hollandia clearly shows this to be true. The ferocity of the pre-landing airstrikes, the unprecedented numbers of troops assembled, and the size and power of the naval force assembled, all ensured that objectives would be achieved and fighting would be minimal. In General Eichelberger's words, "In view of its importance, I think (in the matter of blood and tears) Hollandia was the American victory most economically purchased."[67]

# CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED

Despite the timelessness of the indirect approach and its supporting concepts, and despite the fact that Hollandia was but one amphibious operation out of many (some researched and studied in depth) in World War II, there are lessons of value here for today's operational commander. Some of these may seem like common sense, as does much that has been written about the operational art, but that does not take away from their value.

The operational commander, when considering the indirect approach to achieve an objective, must not restrict his vision to a geographic indirect approach. Focusing on the concepts of dislocation and surprise, rather than on avenues of approach or other physical concepts, will help the commander recognize the wide range of options (geography, time, forces, psychological factors) he has with which to implement his indirect approach. Any asset that will throw the enemy off his balance can be the basis of an indirect approach. A swift counterattack, with forces the enemy does not expect or cannot counter, when enemy forces are unprepared, would make use of the indirect approach even if the axis of advance was aimed directly at the main enemy force.

But this is not to downplay a geographically indirect approach, particularly for the operational commander with an amphibious capability. Hollandia showed how the mobility of

amphibious forces makes them well suited to an operational indirect approach.

While ULTRA provided General MacArthur with the ability to maintain the initiative, the array of intelligence and command and control resources and force capabilities available today provide the operational commander with the ability to use the concepts of dislocation and surprise in ways that would have astounded the World War II commander. Today's operational commander should be able to quickly seize the initiative and maintain it through wise use of the resources available to him, and sustainment of a high operational tempo.

However, even with the vast capabilities of our military forces, dislocation of an enemy may not be permanent. Lines of communication are important to an enemy only if that enemy requires sustained and complex logistical support; they lessen in importance with more primitive forces. One need not go back in history as far as Hollandia to see this. American efforts to cut off supplies to the Vietcong illustrate this fact as well. Today's operational commander must understand the enemy he faces when considering an indirect approach, and may have to adjust his operational concept accordingly.

Surprise and distraction have a major role to play in implementing the indirect approach, and, as described above, the Hollandia campaign illustrated a number of ways in which these concepts can be executed. Deceptions in support of the Hollandia operation reinforced Japanese expectations and beliefs about

American capabilities and intentions, and prevented the Japanese from preparing for the situation they eventually faced. Today's operational commander must integrate deception into his concept in order to ensure surprise.

But, as was shown in the Hollandia operation, surprise may require a tradeoff in flexibility. Although the Allied Air Forces may have wanted additional time to properly prepare the airstrips at Aitape for operations, the need for surprise was considered more important by the operational commander.

The concept inherent in the indirect approach that the operational commander of today would probably find most attractive is the idea of minimal combat. Minimal combat translates easily into minimal casualties, a high priority for any commander. This is particularly true for an American commander today, where the high casualties of attrition warfare work against public and political support at the strategic level. General MacArthur is justly criticized by historians for a variety of reasons; but he is also remembered positively for his campaign in New Guinea (and the Inchon landing), operations using the indirect approach which resulted in few American casualties. Today's operational commander should strive for successes like these.

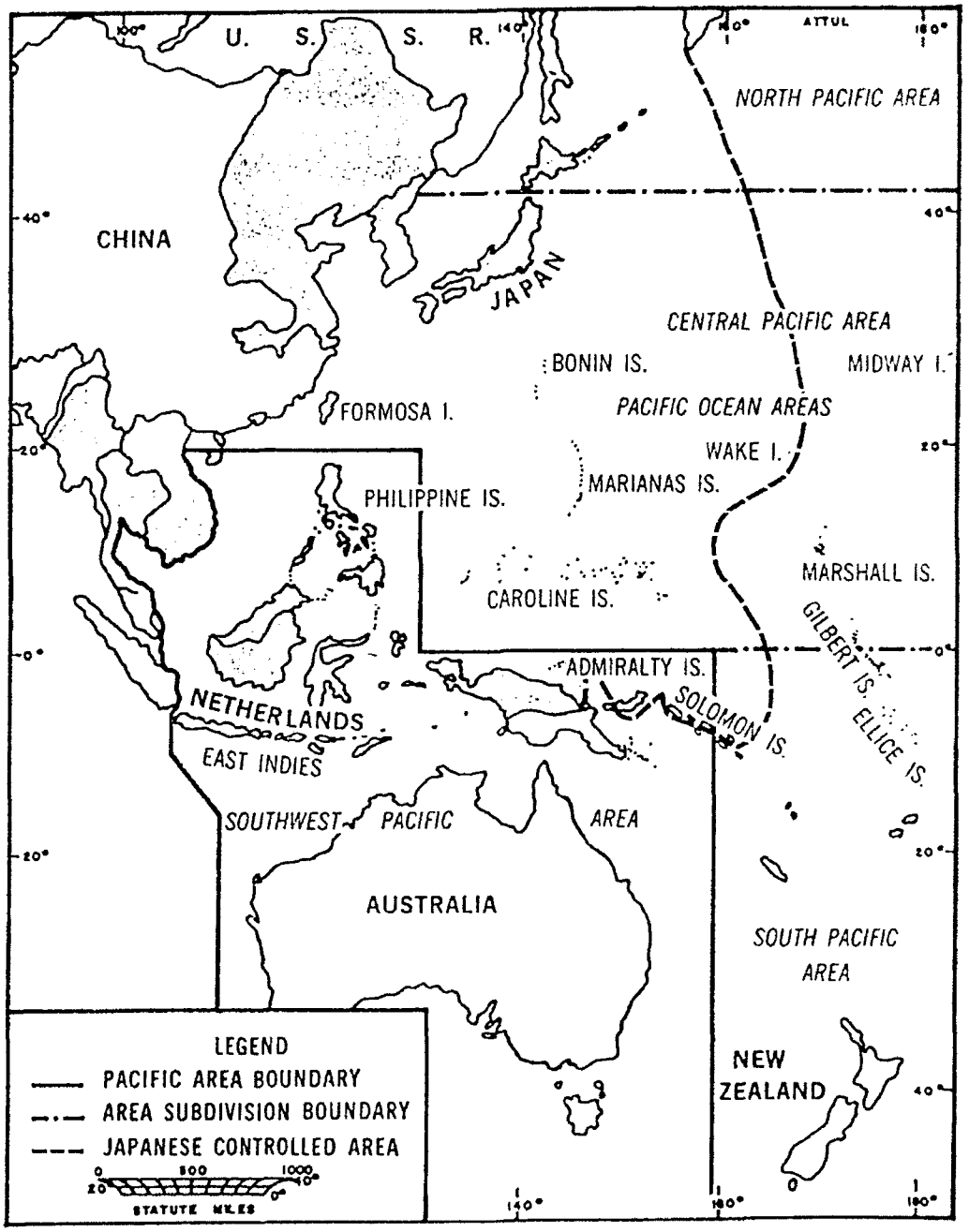
The concept of fighting weakness with strength requires more from today's operational commander, as he lacks the amount of forces massed in World War II. Although the Hollandia operation was a successful joint campaign, the overwhelming combat power

used individually by ground, naval, and air forces made potentially detrimental organizational factors, such as no centralized command of naval forces, irrelevant. The operational commander of today cannot afford anything less than a well organized joint force, in order to achieve the optimum level of mass. This requires the synchronization of the combat power of all the services in time and space by the operational commander, enhanced by a high level of joint training and interoperability.

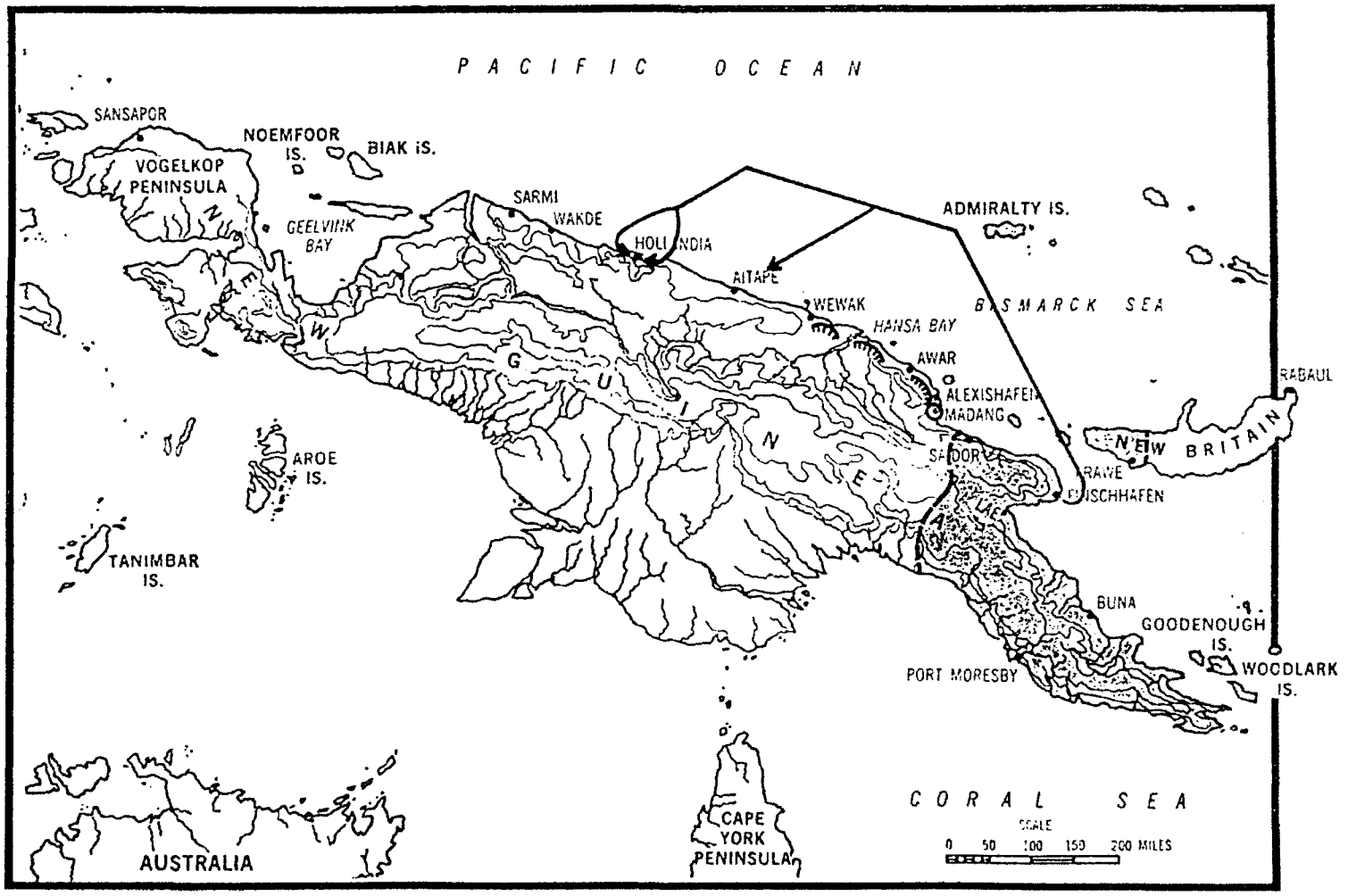
Concepts such as dislocation, high operational tempo, severing lines of communication, maintaining the initiative, distraction and surprise, synchronization of joint combat power, and minimal combat with few casualties, are as valid today as they were during World War II. The importance of the indirect approach, and the concepts inherent in that operational method, is clear when considered in light of the examples provided by history. Future operational commanders would do well to understand how these concepts are applied.

# APPENDIX I

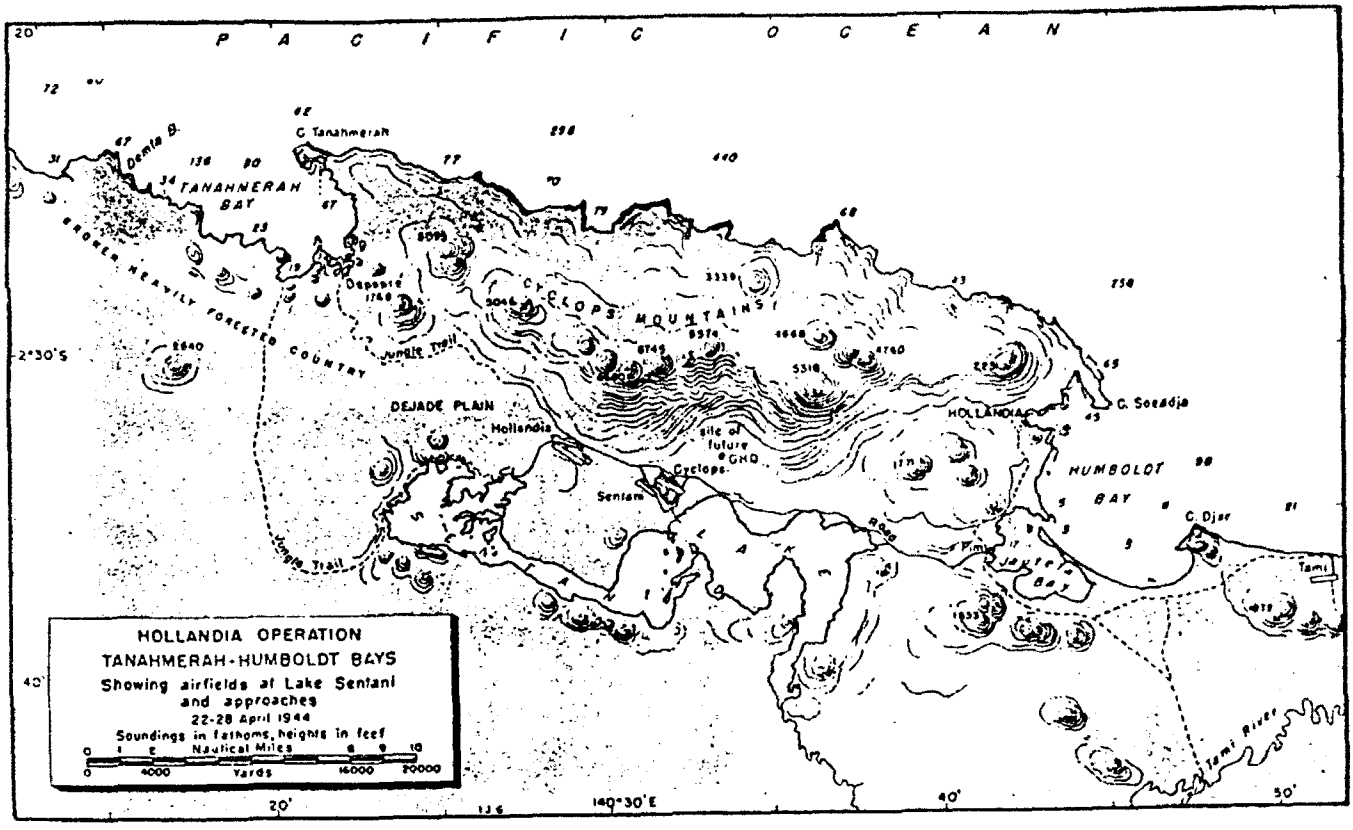
## MAPS



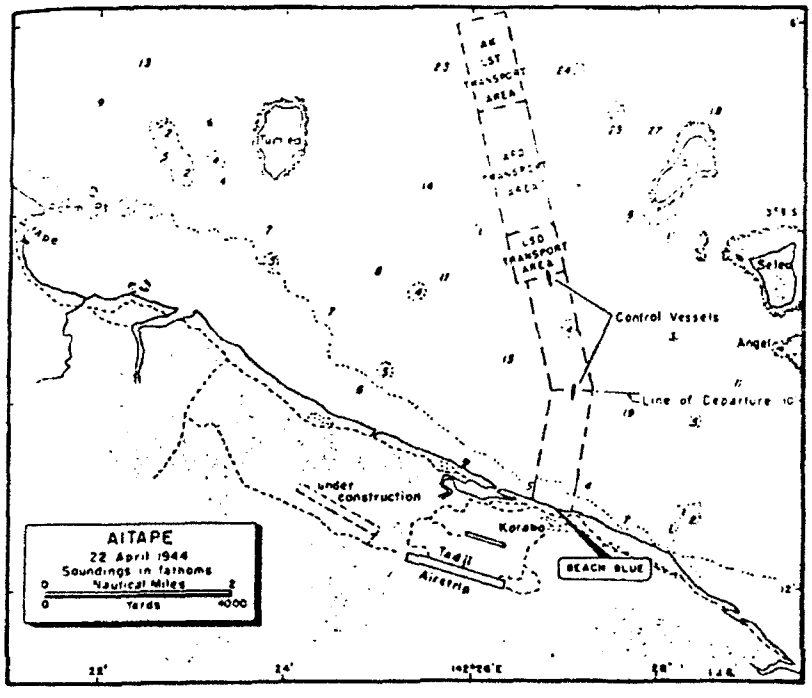

Map 1. Pacific Ocean Areas (March 1944).[68]




Map 2. The Hollandia Operation.[68]




Map 3. Tanahmerah and Humboldt Bays.[70]




Map 4. Aitape.[71]

## NOTES

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